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FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8926  
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE  
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 0380  
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 0402  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 2090  
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 0839  
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 0190  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 0887  
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI 0103  
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI 0152  
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA 0074  
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE 0088  
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI 0113  
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR 0426  
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC//DHO-2/REA/NMJIC-J2//  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC//J5/RUE//  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC  
RUFNMCA/COMUSNAVCENT  
RUQONI/ONI WASHINGTON DC//ONI-243/CAC//

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 000637

SIPDIS

CNO WASHINGTON DC//J2/J3/LECI//

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN (NICOLAIDIS AND SNELSIRE)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/29/2017

TAGS: [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [SNAR](#) [EPET](#) [IR](#) [AF](#) [RS](#)

US, TX

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN'S PRESIDENT TELLS CENTCOM COMMANDER  
MARY EMERGENCY DIVERT TO REMAIN VERBAL AGREEMENT

REF: A. ASHGABAT 636

[1](#)B. 05 ASHGABAT 01093

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Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, a.i. Jennifer L. Brush for reasons 1.  
4 (B) and (D).

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) Turkmenistan's President Gurbanguly Berdimuhammedov reaffirmed to the Commander, U.S. Central Command, Admiral William J. Fallon, during a 20 June meeting in Ashgabat that U.S. military aircraft could use Mary Military Airfield in emergency situations or in bad weather, but firmly refused to formalize the permission in a written agreement. End Summary.

NOT IN WRITING

[1](#)2. (C) During the course of the meeting with President Berdimuhammedov, Admiral Fallon raised the issue of the Mary Emergency Divert Agreement. The Admiral said he was aware that U.S. military aircraft could land at Mary Military Airfield due to in-flight emergencies or bad weather based on a verbal agreement with the government that was first granted by his predecessor, the late President Niyazov. Admiral Fallon said he would appreciate Berdimuhammedov's consideration of this issue, adding that the United States Embassy had presented a proposal in writing to facilitate repair teams coming in, which would make handling such crises easier. Berdimuhammedov responded that this was a difficult

issue because, although Turkmenistan and the United States had good contacts, based on its neutrality, Turkmenistan tries to limit its military relationships. Berdimuhammedov said that U.S. aircraft could land in Mary based on technical and weather problems<sup>8</sup> by working with the Ministry of Defense (MOD) and other appropriate agencies, but that anything more must go through the United Nations (sic) and comply with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) rules. If the UN agreed(!), then there would be no problem. Berdimuhammedov said that up to today there have been no problems with unpredictable (U.S. aircraft) landings.

Work was progressing normally in this area, but stressed the embassy should work collegially with the MOD. Attempting to conclude the discussion, Berdimuhammedov added with emphasis that, "Please understand correctly, this is a neutral country."

¶3. (C) Admiral Fallon said he was glad to hear Turkmenistan would allow emergency landings in the humanitarian interest of the crews, to which Berdimuhammedov replied, "Well, you can't prevent that." The Admiral then commented that he just wanted to be sure the United States -- through the Embassy -- had established channels to communicate with the airfield and that there would be no trouble or surprises in the event of an emergency landing. Berdimuhammedov dismissively said that yes, the embassy could discuss such issues with the Defense Ministry.

COMMENT

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¶4. (C) While not getting Berdimuhammedov's approval to formalize the divert agreement via an exchange of diplomatic notes, Admiral Fallon succeeded in making clear that:

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-- the verbal agreement was still in effect with Berdimuhammedov as president, and

-- Berdimuhammedov authorized the embassy to establish channels of communication with MOD to avoid surprises in handling emergency landings in Mary.

¶5. (C) Berdimuhammedov, freshly back from Iran and Russia, is likely not comfortable rattling the chains of his powerful and deeply-suspicious-of-America neighbors to the north and south, so soon into his new administration. End Comment.

¶6. (U) Admiral Fallon has reviewed this message.

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